I CLAIM

1.   An information retrieval system in which a set of distinct information items map to respective nodes in an array of nodes by mutual similarity of the information items, so 5   that similar information items map to nodes at similar positions in the array of nodes; the system comprising:

   a user control for defining a search criterion for selecting information items;

   a detector for detecting those positions within the array of nodes corresponding to the selected information items; and

10   a graphical user interface for displaying display points which are at positions within a display area on a user display;

   the graphical user interface also displaying in a sequence in time a plurality of representations of the selected information items.

15   2.   A system according to claim 1, wherein the graphical user interface is operable to display a two-dimensional display array of said display points.

3.   A system according to claim 2, in which the mapping between information items and nodes in the array includes a dither component so that substantially identical 20   information items tend to map to closely spaced but different positions in the array.

4.   A system according to claim 1, in which the information items are mapped to nodes in the array on the basis of a feature vector derived from each information item.

25   5.   A system according to claim 4, in which the feature vector for an information item represents a set of frequencies of occurrence, within that information item, of each of a group of information features.

6.   A system according to claim 5, in which the information items comprise textual 30   information, the feature vector for an information item represents a set of frequencies of occurrence, within that information item, of each of a group of words.

7.   A system according to claim 1, in which the information items comprise textual information, the nodes being mapped by mutual similarity of at least a part of the textual information.

5   8.   A system according to claim 6, in which the information items are pre-processed for mapping by excluding words occurring with more than a threshold frequency amongst the set of information items.

9.   A system according to claim 6, in which the information items are pre-processed

10   for mapping by excluding words occurring with less than a threshold frequency amongst the set of information items.

10.   A system according to claim 1, wherein the said user control comprises:
        search means for carrying out a search of the information items;

15   the search means and the graphical user interface being arranged to co-operate so that only those display points corresponding to information items selected by the search are displayed on the user display.

11.   A system according to claim 1, wherein the said sequence in time is a serial visual

20   presentation of the said representations.

12.   A system according to claim 11, wherein the said representations are displayed one at a time in sequence in the same display zone.

25   13.   A system according to claim 11, wherein a plurality of said representations are displayed at the same time in respective display zones.

14.   A system according to claim 11, wherein a plurality of streams of representations are displayed at the same time in respective display zones.

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15.   A system according to claim 11, comprising a further user control for selecting a said representation, and causing the display of information related to the selected representation.

5   16.   A system according to claim 1, wherein the said representation comprise images.

17.   A system according to claim 1, where the said representations comprise text.

18.   A system according to claim 1, wherein the said representation comprises links to
10   the information items represented thereby.

19.   A portable data processing device comprising a system according to claim 1.

20.   Video acquisition and/or processing apparatus comprising a system according to
15   claim 1.

21.   An information retrieval method in which a set of distinct information items map to respective nodes in an array of nodes by mutual similarity of the information items, so that similar information items map to nodes at similar positions in the array of nodes; the
20   method comprising the steps of:
        defining a search criterion for selecting information items;
        detecting those positions within the array of nodes corresponding to the selected information items; and
        displaying display points which are at positions within a display area on a user
25   display corresponding to the selected information items;
        the graphical user interface also displaying in a sequence in time a plurality of representations of the selected information items.

22.   A method according to claim 21, wherein the step of displaying displays a two-
30   dimensional display array of said display points.

23.   A method according to claim 21, wherein the said sequence in time is a serial visual presentation of the said representations.

24.   A method according to claim 21, further comprising a further user control for selecting a said representation, and causing the display of information related to the selected representation.

25.   Computer software having program code for carrying out a method according to claim 21.

26.   A providing medium for providing program code according to claim 25.

27.   A medium according to claim 26, the medium being a storage medium.

28.   A medium according to claim 26, the medium being a transmission medium.

29.   A user interface of an information retrieval system in which a set of distinct information items map to respective nodes in an array of nodes by mutual similarity of the information items, so that similar information items map to nodes at similar positions in the array of nodes; the interface comprising:

        a user control for defining a search criterion for selecting information items; and

        a graphical user interface having a display area arranged to display points which are at positions within a display area corresponding to the selected information items, and a display area arranged to display in a sequence in time a plurality of representations of the selected information items.

30.   A user interface according to claim 29, wherein graphical user interface displays a two-dimensional display array of said display points.

31.   A user interface according to claim 29, wherein the said sequence in time is a serial visual presentation of the said representations.

32.   A user interface according to claim 29, further comprising a further user control for selecting a said representation, and causing the display of information related to the selected representation.

5   33.   A user interface according to claim 29, further comprising a user control for applying further search criteria to the search.

34.   A user interface according to claim 29, further comprising a presentation control for controlling the presentation of the said sequence of representations.